

Date of Hearing: April 16, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Al Muratsuchi, Chair

AB 717 (Chávez) – As Amended: March 21, 2013

SUBJECT: Veterans.

SUMMARY: Changes the role and composition of the Veterans Board. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Changes the duty of the California Veterans Board (Board) from determining all policies for the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to serving as an advisory body to the CalVet Secretary.
- 2) Deletes the requirements that:
  - a) A member of the Board have substantial training or professional expertise in mortgage lending and real estate finance.
  - b) A member of the Board have substantial training or professional expertise in geriatrics, gerontology, or long-term care.
  - c) A member of the Board have an accounting or auditing background, and preferably shall be a certified public accountant.
  - d) A member of the Board have a degree in health care administration or have experience in the financial management of health care facilities.
- 3) Requires that every member of the Board be a member in good standing with a congressionally chartered veteran service organization.
- 4) Retains the requirement that a member of the Board shall have substantial training, professional knowledge, or experience in the issues faced by female veterans which may include, but are not limited to, the following issues:
  - a) Combat-related disorders;
  - b) Sexual trauma; and
  - c) Homelessness.
- 5) Directs that nothing in the bill shall be construed to prohibit any member of the Board from serving the remainder of his or her term.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Creates the Board. The Board shall consist of seven members who shall be appointed by the Governor subject to the confirmation of the Senate.

- 2) Requires that all members of the board shall be veterans as “veteran” is defined in Section 18540.4 of the Government Code. One of these members shall also be retired from the active or reserve forces of the United States military service. One of these members shall also be a resident of a California veterans home.
- 3) Requires:
- 4) One member of the Board must have substantial training or professional expertise in mortgage lending and real estate finance.
- 5) One member of the Board must have substantial training or professional expertise in geriatrics, gerontology, or long-term care.
- 6) One member of the Board shall have an accounting or auditing background, and preferably shall be a certified public accountant.
- 7) One member of the Board must have a degree in health care administration or have experience in the financial management of health care facilities.
- 8) One member of the Board must have substantial training, professional knowledge, or experience in the issues faced by female veterans which may include, but are not limited to, the following issues:
  - a) Combat-related disorders;
  - b) Sexual trauma;
  - c) Homelessness.
- 9) Provides that Board appointments shall be for terms of four years.
- 10) Mandates that the member of the board who is a resident of a California veterans home shall be appointed for a term expiring January 15 of an odd-numbered year. Subsequent appointments shall be made on a rotational basis based on the age of the home, beginning with the oldest veterans home with independent living.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown at this time.

COMMENTS:

According to the author:

AB 717 is a much needed change that will encourage our board members to become more invested in the well-being of California Veterans. Currently the appointees to the CVB must represent very specific professional areas including a mortgage expert, aging care professional, auditor, and healthcare administrator. These professional requirements were added to infuse expertise into CDVA when the board was used to establish operational policy, a practice which was retired over forty years ago. Not only are these

professions not useful in fulfilling the job of an oversight board, but the application pool is significantly restricted.

Secondly, current law states that the CVB sets policy for CDVA. This has not been common practice in forty years as CDVA has grown. AB 717 updates law to reflect current practice of using the CVB as an advisory board to the Secretary of CDVA.

Since the board's inception there have been a number of bills requiring particular expertise for increasing numbers of the Board members. Anecdotal evidence is that it has been difficult to fill seats on the Board due to the highly specialized nature of the many requirements. If indeed it has been difficult to fill the seats because of the restrictive nature of the appointment conditions, this measure should address that in large part.

The decision to remove most of these requirements does represent a policy shift, however, from a highly regulated approach to the composition of the Board to an approach which transfers much more discretion to the appointment process and the Governor.

A significant policy shift is also present in the proposal as it changes the role of the Board from determining all policies of CalVet to serving as an advisory body. Discussions with the Board and CalVet staff suggest that the bill will, as the author suggests, conform the code to the status quo. Nevertheless, a policy question for members is present as to whether to alter the statutory role of the Board.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Commanders Veterans Council

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: John Spangler / V. A. / (916) 319-3550